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SUBJECT: OLLANTA HUMALA ONE YEAR LATER

REF: A. LIMA 2000

[B](#). LIMA 1841
[C](#). LIMA 86 (06)

Summary:

[1](#). (SBU) Ollanta Humala, the Chavez protege who nearly became Peru's President in June 2006, told Poloffs that he remains politically active, meeting with members of his Peruvian Nationalist Party (PNP) congressional bloc as well as unionists and regional presidents. Humala took pains to distinguish his own commitment to peaceful, democratic politics from the more extreme views espoused by his father, Isaac Humala, and his brother, Antauro Humala. His programmatic ideas -- call for a constitutional assembly, opposition to the FTA and assertion that the formal political system does not represent the interests of the majority -- remain the same as one year ago. Humala is still angry about losing his U.S. visa and continued to insist that it be restored. While Humala's weak organization-building skills seemed manifest in his office's palpable quiet, he remains a polished spokesperson for the dispossessed who cannot be ruled out as the possible consensus candidate of a fragmented left looking to in the favor of many impoverished Peruvians in 2011. End Summary.

[2](#). (U) Ollanta Humala, the Chavez protege who came within four points of winning Peru's presidency one year ago, proved highly approachable and friendly in a meeting with Poloffs on 6/4.

[3](#). (U) In the conversation, the first between Humala and the U.S. Embassy in over a year, Humala took pains to distinguish himself from both his jailed brother, Antauro, and his father, Isaac (Ref B). Ollanta emphasized that he was a Peruvian nationalist first and foremost and strongly disagreed with the Ethnocacerista focus on race. He was equally emphatic about his commitment to peaceful change through democratic means, and his firm opposition to violence whatever its political justification. Humala emphasized that Peru had learned through its experience with the Shining Path (Sendero Luminoso) terrorist insurgency that violence was not the answer.

[4](#). (U) Humala's political platform remains the same as last year. Among the points he emphasized:

-- The established political system represented the interests of a small minority, and the great majority of Peruvians -- over half of whom live in poverty and 30% in extreme poverty

-- were unrepresented by it. He wished to represent the interests of those people.

-- Peru needs a constituent assembly to rearrange the rules of the game that do not serve the interests of the majority and to increase the role of the state in distributing economic benefits more fairly.

-- Humala opposes the PTPA because it would favor U.S. companies over those of Peru. He complimented the work on labor and environmental issues of PTPA opponents and skeptics in the U.S. Congress, underscoring the irony that Peru's own Congress had failed to do what the U.S. Congress was now seeking to do before approving the agreement.

15. (SBU) Humala said that he remains politically active. He meets regularly with the PNP bloc in Congress and he said that his headquarters constantly receives visitors. He said he had just met with representatives of a mineworkers union as well as the Regional President of Puno, Hernan Fuentes. (Note: Fuentes ran as the candidate of Peru's Avanza Pais (Advance the Country) Party, which selected another Ulises Humala, brother of Antauro and Ollanta, as its candidate. Press accounts recently reported that the Government of Venezuela has opened an office of President Hugo Chavez' Bolivarian Alternative for Latin America and the Caribbean -- ALBA -- in Puno. Ref A, further details Septel.) He also expressed regret at the counterproductive interventions of Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez during the 2006 campaign, clearly indicating that this had not gone according to his wishes.

The Visa Still Smarts

16. (SBU) Humala's overall friendly tone changed notably when the question of his U.S. visa surfaced. When Poloff mentioned Humala's November 2006 trip to Cuba for a gall bladder operation, the former candidate bristled and said, "I would have gone to the U.S., but you took away my visa." Humala appeared convinced that the revocation had been politically motivated and unpersuaded by the explanation that it had long preceded the 2006 presidential campaign. He strenuously denied any involvement in the attempted New Years 2005 uprising led by his brother, Antauro, which left four policemen dead. He insisted that the U.S. admit what he alleged was its error in cancelling his visa and, if we were concerned at all by the justice of the issue, to return it to him as before. When Poloffs told him he was welcome to reapply, Humala waved away this suggestion.

Comment: An Able Spokesman, But Not an Organizer

17. (U) Despite the visa contretemps, Humala proved friendly and approachable, and seemed to genuinely appreciate our visit. He presented his issues effectively, showing a certain refinement in the youthful, "country boy" style that served him so effectively in last year's presidential campaign (Ref C). Clearly, practice has given him more polish. What Humala apparently lacks is a taste for organization-building. His headquarters was almost deserted, exceedingly quiet even for a party center between campaigns. His operating style also seems to reflect the presumption that important people should come to him rather than the reverse. When frustrated, as with the question of the visa, Humala reverts to an authoritarian, military manner, attempting to give orders to solve problems that are beyond his power. Humala's organizational weakness has proven to be his Achilles heel. Nonetheless, he remains a talented spokesperson with high name recognition and could again emerge as the consensus candidate of Peru's fragmented left and its many dispossessed in a future election.
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